BROUGHT TO BOOK.

CHAPTER IV.

"Yesh, but you won't see me tomorrow."

It was three weeks later. Marcus Gray had been as good as his word. Not only had he made Crake's acquaintance in the interim, but by this time the two, to employ an expressive locution, had become as "thick as thieves." He had sought out Crake at the billiard room of the Flagon and Cask, the tavern which Inspector Fountain's report to Mr. Orde had mentioned as being his favorite house of call. Gray's role had been that of a simple young American over in London for a holiday, with no lack of money to fling away, and not caring much how he got rid of it so long as he saw plenty of "life" in return. It was a part he played to perfection, and Crake clung to him like a leech from the moment he found that the supply of sovereigns to be squeezed out of him in one way or another had no apparent limit. They got into the way of meeting regularly about two o'clock in the afternoon, when Crake, who was really a crack player, would for the next two hours give lessons to his new found friend in the art and mystery of billiards, always of course for a consideration. Later on they would dine and spend the evening together, equally of course at the American's expense.

For the present there was only one thing that Gray stuck out against. He would have nothing to do with the betting on the turf, but Crake by no means despaired of being able by and by to overcome a prejudice so puritanical and absurd and one at the same time so inimical to his own interests.

On the night to which we have now come Gray and Crake left the Flagon and Cask together, as they had done several times before. It was half past twelve and closing time, and no sooner had they crossed the threshold than the door was shut and bolted behind them. They had been playing billiards together since eight o'clock, Crake of course giving his opponent a certain number of points, notwithstanding which the American had lost every game but two. Tonight, too, he had insisted on backing his play for half a sovereign a game, and as by some mischance—it was a thing which had never happened before—he had fallen short of ready money, the result had been that by the time they left off play Crake held his I O U for three pounds fifteen borrowed cash, as to which he was not at all uneasy, feeling sure he would be recouped on the morrow. It was evident that Gray, who was ordinarily most abstemious, had been drinking more than was good for him. He staggered slightly as he came out into the cool night air and clutched at the lapel of his companion's coat.

Crake drew the other's arm within his own, and as they strolled up the street together he said:

"I suppose I had better hail the first hansom we come across?"

To which Gray, who had left his uncle's house some time before and was now in lodgings at the west end, replied:

"Right you are, dear boy; only I haven't got a blessed sou to pay the cabby with." Here he gave a lurch which carried Crake and himself half across the pavement.

"My dear fellow, as if my purse wasn't at your service!" exclaimed Crake reproachfully.

A second or two later Gray came to an unsteady halt.

"Crake," he said with tipsy gravity, "I've made a dashed idjit of m'shelf t'night."

"Can't see it, my boy. What is it that you have done?"

"I've given you I O U for the money I owe you, while all the time I've a twenty pound note in my pocketbook."

"That's no good tonight, old man. There's no place open where you could get it changed. But what does it matter? You can redeem your bit of paper when I see you tomorrow."

"Yesh, but you won't see me tomorrow," answered Gray with another lurch and a hiccough. "Going to Paris by morning train. Telegram. Forgot all about it till now. Mush go. Be back in a fortnight or three weeks. If you can't change note, I O U mush stand over till I come back."

For a full minute or more Crake stood in silent thought. The chances were, he argued, that if the American once got as far as Paris nothing more would be seen of him in London, in which case his I O U would be so much waste paper. The sum was not a large one, but Crake was by no means minded to lose it.

He set his teeth hard for a moment or two and then he said:

"If you like to come with me as far as my lodgings, I think I can perhaps manage to change your note."

Half an hour later Marcus Gray was on his way home in a hansom. All signs of inebriety had vanished. He was his usual self—keen, alert and quietly self possessed. In exchange for his twenty pound note Crake had given him three five pound notes, his I O U and the balance in cash.

Eustace Crake was seated at breakfast next morning, with a sporting newspaper supported against the hot water jug in front of him, when the door of his sitting room was unceremoniously opened and two men, entire strangers to him, walked in and shut the door behind them.

"You are Mr. Eustace Crake?" said the elder of the two interrogatively.

Crake nodded.

"I am Inspector Fountain, of Scotland Yard," added the officer.

On the instant every vestige of color faded out of Crake's face, leaving it of a gray, corpselike pallor. For a few moments he was like a man suddenly smitten with the loss of speech; then, with a grimace which he evidently meant for a smile, he said:

"To what may I attribute the honor of this visit, Mr. Inspector?"

"Last night, or rather at an early hour this morning, you changed a twenty pound note for a gentleman of the name of Gray, giving him as part of the change three notes of five pounds each. Can you oblige me, Mr. Crake, by informing me when and from whom the notes in question came into your possession?"

Crake bit his lip hard for a moment or two, as if the pain might help him to keep down the nervous trembling that was beginning to overmaster him. Then he said:

"Really, you ask me more than I am in a position to tell you. In my profession, which is that of a betting man, such a number of notes pass through my hands in the course of a month that it is out of the question for me to keep any record of their numbers or to remember from whom I may have received this one or the other."

"I can quite understand that," replied Fountain. "May I ask whether you are acquainted with any one of the name of Parkinson—Mr. William Parkinson?"

Crake considered awhile and then shook his head.

"I have no recollection of having been introduced to or done business with any one of that name. But what is the object of all this catechising, if I may be allowed a question in my turn?"

"That you will presently learn. In the first place, I may inform you that it was a Mr. Parkinson who paid the late Mr. Lumsden a certain sum in bank notes on the morning of that gentleman's death, which notes were undoubtedly stolen by the person or persons who were guilty of the murder."

"Ah!" was all that Crake could find to say for a moment. Then, after moistening his lips with his tongue, he added: "You will pardon me if I fail to see in what way that fact connects itself with the notes paid over by me to Mr. Gray. My cousin, Mr. Charles Lumsden, in a talk I had with him a little while ago, distinctly assured me that the number of the missing notes were not known. Now, if that be the case how"— His eyes finished the question.

"It is quite true, Mr. Crake, that the number of the stolen notes are not known," said the inspector gravely "but that does not imply that there may not be other means of identification."

"Not one of the notes paid by me to Gray bore an indorsement of any kind. On that point I can speak most positively," was Crake's reply.

"In any case I must ask you to accompany me to Scotland Yard," said Fountain. "I have a cab waiting at the corner of the street."

On their arrival at Scotland Yard Inspector Fountain ushered his charge into a room where two officials in uniform were busy writing, with one of whom he held a brief colloquy in a low voice. In another room, although Crake did not know it, Marcus Gray and Mr. Parkinson were in waiting, in case any further evidence beyond that which they had already tendered should be required.

Their colloquy at an end, one of the officials produced from a drawer the three notes given by Crake to Gray a few hours before and handed them to Fountain, who proceeded to straighten them out on the smooth surface of the desk. They were old and crumpled and frayed at the edges: they had seen much service and were grimy with the contact of many fingers. As they lay there, face downward, no sign of an indorsement or memorandum of any sort was visible on the back of any of them. Fountain had beckoned to Crake, who, with gray, set face and straining eyes, was now peering over his shoulder, and it was not till the former with his forefinger had drawn attention to what even when closely examined looked like nothing more than a few meaningless dots and scratches in faded ink on the soiled paper that Crake, sharpsighted as he was, as much as noticed their existence. Then, producing a small magnifying glass and offering it to the other, Fountain said:

"And now, sir, if you will look through this you will see that on each of the notes is plainly to be read in phonographic characters—that is to say, in shorthand—the indorsement, 'William Parkinson,' together with the date of June the eighth, the very day, in point of fact, before the murder of Mr. Lumsden."

Scarcely had the last words left the officer's lips before Crake fell backward in a swoon. A careful search of his lodgings brought to light two more notes bearing a similar phonographic indorsement. The remaining five had probably been passed away by him in the ordinary course of his business. He was committed for trial in due course, but before that event took place he contrived to commit suicide in his cell. In a paper which he left behind him occurred the following passage:

"It is true that I killed my cousin, but I asseverate most solemnly that the act was wholly unpremeditated and was the result of a moment of ungovernable passion."

Some three months later one of the quietest of quiet weddings was celebrated in a certain suburban church. To the reader who has seen fit thus far to follow the fortunes of the personages concerned in this narrative it would be superfluous to mention the name of either the bride or bridegroom.—All the Year Round.

Browning's Memory.

Few people possessed the gift of memory in a higher degree than Mr. Browning. I am reminded of this by what I have been recently told by his friend and mine, Mrs. Le Poer Wynne. She tells me that in company with Mr. Browning and Mr. Cotter Morison they were one day discussing Byron, of whom Mr. Browning was an intense admirer. He spoke of Byron's extraordinary powers of satire, and repeated at considerable length a portion of the "Vision of Judgment," beginning with the words, "St. Peter stood at the celestial gate." When he finished, Mr. Browning said, "I have not repeated those lines for forty years, but they are graven on my memory." Then he burst out with the remark, "Byron was one of the most wonderful men ever created," and turning to Mrs. Wynne he said, pressing her arm in the way he had when much interested, "To think of all this coming to an end at thirty-seven!"

Mr. Cotter Morison agreed that as a satirist Byron was unrivaled, but threw out the query, "Is he a great poet?" Mr. Browning for answer recited with intense feeling those well known lines, "'Tis well that I should be unmoved," never faltering at a word. Mrs. Wynne tells me that he asked her if she remembered the dedication to "Don Juan" and proceeded to quote from it at some length.—Temple Bar.

Electric Lights and Plant Life.

The action exercised by the electric light on plants varies according to the species, and to solve the problem numerous researches are still necessary. The only points which seem to be decided are the following: The electric light accelerates assimilation, and often hastens growth and maturation; in some cases it intensifies the coloration of flowers, and sometimes increases the production. Nocturnal repose is not absolutely necessary for the growth and development of all the plants. The direct rays produced by the electric arc without globe have a very injurious effect on flowers too close to the lamp. The intervention between the arc and plants of a globe of ordinary glass arrests all hurtful effects which are exclusively attributable to violet and ultraviolet rays, and not, as was first supposed, to the production of nitrous acid.—Horticultural Times.

Chicago policemen use bicycles.

No man counts up his thousands without seeing that they come to naught.—Inter Ocean.

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